

**COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA**  
**Rabbit Valley Working Group Meeting Minutes**  
**June 3, 2002**

Attendees:

Art Donoho	Mike Click	John Potter
Bob Silbernagel	Jim Cooper	Jane Ross
Gene Arnesen	Dave Dunsmoor	Lovell Sasser
Nadja Brozina	Dave Farny	Julie Stotler
Kathy Click	N. J. Fulmer	Paul Toft

**Greetings and Introductions**

Chairman Dave Farny called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m., at the Fruita Community Center. Approximately 15 people were present.

Dave initially said this was to be the final meeting of the Working Group. However, Jane Ross, Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) Planning and Environmental Coordinator, stated that it appears the Working Group, Advisory Council, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will be the beneficiaries of a reprieve from the original schedule stipulated for completing a management plan for the National Conservation Area (NCA). Jane suggested it would be a good idea to allow the BLM to draft recommendations based on the Working Group discussions to date, and then have the Working Group meet to review them.

**Working Group Discussions**

It was agreed that the Working Group would meet at 5:30 p.m., July 8, at the BLM office in Grand Junction. At that time, Jim Cooper, BLM Transportation Planner, is scheduled to present maps showing the area's existing trails, proposed new trails, proposed trail closures, as well as planned pasture fences.

The group restated its recommendation that the fence along U.S. Highway 6 & 50, north of I-70, be moved closer to the highway. In addition, the group endorsed the idea of cross-fencing in Rabbit Valley to assist the BLM in rotating pastures within grazing allotments. The rotation is being designed to improve range health.

Jane noted that there are still open sheep allotments in the Rabbit Valley area, although permittees are not currently using them. The Working Group could make recommendations regarding the use of those areas, as well as for such things as planting native, or non-native, seed in rangeland restoration efforts.

N. J. Fulmer indicated that she did not want to recommend seed types but did want to focus on the larger issue of ensuring that land health is improved and maintained.

Questions were raised once again about assuming management of both Rabbit Valley and the Utah Rims area, immediately to the west. Dave Farny reported that he had discussed the issue with Ken Curry, a member of both the Northwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC) and the CCNCA Advisory Council. Ken indicated that Utah RAC representatives were eager to pursue this issue.

Jane announced that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the BLM Grand Junction and Moab field offices is being prepared. This agreement will grant authority to the Grand Junction field office for managing the Utah Rims, in cooperation with Moab.

Art Donoho inquired about using the CCNCA management plan to oversee the Utah Rims lands as well. Jim indicated that if the MOU were not completed by the time the management plan is done, amending the plan to incorporate the Utah lands would be relatively easy.

Bob Silbernagel said that the following recommendations from the Working Group have already been presented to the CCNCA Advisory Council:

- Target shooting should be banned south of I-70. The BLM should continue to look for a suitable location within the NCA, but north of I-70.
- Backcountry campers in Rabbit Valley should be required to use fire pans and porta potties.
- A large campground with easy access off I-70 should be developed. Acquisition of property owned by Chris Joufflas, about a mile south of the Rabbit Valley exit, looks promising. The Working Group encouraged the BLM to continue pursuing a land exchange with Chris, in a combined effort to not only provide designated camping but also eliminate in-holdings within the NCA.
- A camping area capable of serving large groups with horse trailers and campers, in a separate area from the larger main campground, is also needed. The site used this spring by the horse endurance riders does not appear suitable because of its susceptibility to high winds and blowing dust.
- A new recreational trail plan incorporating more loops and closing dead-end trails, unless those trails go to camping areas or scenic overlooks, is needed. The Working Group is awaiting a proposal from Jim on this.

Additionally, the Working Group asked that the following recommendations be forwarded to the Advisory Council:

- Transfer administration of the Utah Rims area to ensure consistent management of trails that begin in the NCA and run into Utah.

- The fence along U.S. Highway 6 & 50 should be moved closer to the highway.
- Cross-fencing is needed on grazing allotments, along with vegetation treatments and seeding, to enhance grazing management and improve land health.

The meeting was adjourned.